

## Early Learning Insights

*Newsletter of the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development*

October 9, 2015

### In This Issue

Awards of Excellence  
Announced

Success in Innovation  
Zones

Two-and Four-Year  
Colleges Partnering

Illinois Leading in the  
Incorporation of Social  
Emotional Learning in the  
Classroom

### About OECD

#### **Alignment. Quality. Access.**

OECD leads the state's initiatives to create an integrated system of quality, early learning and development programs to help give all Illinois children a strong educational foundation before they begin kindergarten. [Learn more.](#)

### New Resources

Partner Plan Act:  
Community Systems  
Development Initiative

CDC Child Obesity Fact



**Theresa Hawley**  
*Executive Director*

### Dear Early Learning Partner,

There's no doubt that we are facing challenging times in Illinois. Yet nearly every day, I see a new piece of research or hear a story from the field that validates the importance of the early childhood years and the need for a strongly integrated system that supports our state's youngest learners and their families. The work that each and every one of us is doing on a daily basis -- as teacher, director, researcher, funder, advocate, policymaker, parent -- is vital. There is remarkable work in progress in programs and communities throughout Illinois, some of which is featured in this month's *Insights*. On behalf of the OECD team, thank you for all your work for Illinois children and families as we continue onward together.

Warmly,  
Theresa Hawley

### Top Stories



### ExceleRate Illinois Awards of Excellence

We are thrilled to announce Illinois' first programs to hold the title of **Awards of Excellence**, the highest honor in the ExceleRate system. These first awards were given in the area of Inclusion of Children with Special Needs to: Champaign Early Childhood Center; Stock School (Chicago); Carole Robertson Center for Learning (Chicago); Summerdale Early Childhood Center (Rockford); Fairview Early Childhood Center (Rockford); Dennis Early Childhood Center (Rockford); ECDEC PFA/Eisenhower

Sheet

Infant Immunizations

Early Educator Central

## OECD Initiatives

ExceleRate Illinois

MIECHV

Early Learning Council

Other OECD Initiatives  
Below

## Additional Resources

For Early Childhood  
Educators

For Parents

Contact OECD

## Stay Connected

Join Our Mailing List

Forward to a Friend

School (Prospect Heights); and  
Urbana Early Childhood School.

Once an ExceleRate Illinois  
program has achieved a Gold  
Circle of Quality designation, it  
can work towards an Award of  
Excellence. Congratulations to  
each of these outstanding  
programs! For more information  
about the Awards of

Excellence, contact Donna Nylander at [Donna.Nylander@illinois.gov](mailto:Donna.Nylander@illinois.gov) or  
visit [www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com](http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com).



*Recipients of the  
Awards of Excellence*

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## Creating an Unduplicated List of Early Childhood Sites

In an effort to understand how funding sources support quality, LEE  
Fellows Kelsey Connor and Ellen Moiani have nearly completed the first  
unduplicated list of all early childhood sites in Illinois, including capacity  
for licensed child care, Preschool for All, and Head Start. Ultimately,  
the purpose of this list will help us understand how funding sources  
support quality -- combined or in isolation. The OECD has formed a  
workgroup with our partner agencies to identify opportunities to use and  
build on this list in order to make system level modifications that can  
improve outcomes for children. For more information contact Bryan  
Stokes ([Bryan.Stokes@illinois.gov](mailto:Bryan.Stokes@illinois.gov)).

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## Innovation Zones: Success in Greater East St. Louis and North Lawndale



*Photo from mainspringschools.org*

In eleven communities across the  
state, Early Childhood Innovation  
Zones are working to improve  
outcomes for young children as  
well as connecting vital information  
to state policymakers through  
feedback loops and systems. This  
month's *Insights* features  
groundbreaking efforts in Greater East St. Louis and North Lawndale (a  
Chicago neighborhood), both of which have been working towards  
locally achieving defined priorities since the initiative began in 2013.

This spring, the Greater East St. Louis Innovation Zone launched their  
first community-wide screening campaign, which included alignment of  
intake forms in partnership with child care centers, Head Start, the  
school district, Early Intervention, and other groups, resulting in the  
referral of 305 children to home visiting, preschool, and other early care

and education programs. The North Lawndale Innovation Zone led two community wide outreach days, using common messaging to identify, recruit and enroll more than 100 families in early learning programs. They built partnerships with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the Department of Children and Family Services' Teen Parent Services Network, a large health center and a homeless shelter using a centralized referral process to facilitate enrollment.

For more information, contact Leah Pouw at [leah.pouw@actforchildren.org](mailto:leah.pouw@actforchildren.org)

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## Meet Kathy Stohr, Deputy Director of OECD

The OECD welcomes Kathy Stohr to the team as Deputy Director. In this role, Kathy will be working with OECD staff and the Early Childhood Interagency Team to ensure effective and efficient implementation of cross-agency projects, including Federal early childhood grants. Most recently, Kathy worked as a consultant with Illinois Action for Children, managing the Consortium for Community Systems Development. Kathy can be contacted at [Kathy.Stohr@illinois.gov](mailto:Kathy.Stohr@illinois.gov).



**Kathy Stohr**  
**Deputy Director**

## Policy Corner

### Children with Disabilities to Gain Greater Access to Early Childhood Programs

The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services released a joint policy statement on inclusion last month. According to the [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#), "all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations."



## In the News

### Grants Spur Partnerships Between Two and Four Year

## Colleges and Universities

*Catalyst Chicago* recently published an in-depth article about one of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge initiatives that is building capacity within the early childhood workforce. Read [here](#) about the impact of relatively small grants to Illinois universities to partner with community colleges to develop strategies that better align two- and four-year colleges and recognize the various pathways early childhood educators pursue towards a bachelor's degree.



*Photo from citelighter.com*



### Illinois Leads in Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom

A recent article from University of Illinois at Chicago researchers marks Illinois' revised Early Learning and Development Standards as "an important advancement for the field, particularly with regard to Social Emotional Learning" because of the clear and comprehensive learning goals and alignment across a common framework that extends through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. See [Early Childhood Research and Practice](#) for more details and a complete analysis

### Does Pre-K Impact Third Grade Achievement?

A recent study of Tennessee's Pre-K program has raised questions about the link between part-day Pre-K and third grade reading and math skills. Linda Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers her perspective on a multitude of factors influencing 3<sup>rd</sup> grade outcomes and emphasizes the importance of creating a unified, cohesive education system beginning at birth and continuing through the elementary school years. Read her full statement [here](#).



*Photo from stateimpact.npr.org*

## Fast Fact of the Month

Are you looking for resources to help build and sustain powerful collaborations that can improve local community development systems? Check out the newly-revamped website [www.partnerplanact.org](http://www.partnerplanact.org) at Illinois Action for Children and the BUILD Initiative's [Community Systems Development Toolkit](#).

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Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development | | [Penny.Segura@illinois.gov](mailto:Penny.Segura@illinois.gov) | [earlychildhood.illinois.gov](http://earlychildhood.illinois.gov)

160 N. LaSalle St. Suite N-100  
Chicago, IL 60601  
312-814-6379

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